

C.—THERAPEUTICS OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM AND MIND.

THE MBOUNDOU POISON.—The following are the principal points of a recent memoir by M. Testut on the mboundou poison of Gaboon, Africa, as given in a notice in *La France Médicale*:

In the first place, the author found the action of the poison varies according to the way it was administered, and the dose. With small doses there were invariably observed convulsive symptoms, indicating increased reflex excitability. If given in large doses, the animal appeared as if struck down, respiration was arrested in a few seconds, and the frog became a passive mass, not even responding, in any way whatever, to excitations; nevertheless, he is not dead; the heart continues to beat with normal regularity.

M. Testut therefore suspects that there may be two principles in this famous ordeal poison: one exciting the reflex activities, and the other stupefying and paralyzing them, this last acting only when large doses are given, and killing the animal before the convulsive phenomena have had time to appear. Whatever they or it may be, elimination takes place through the regular channels, and, in case of the frog, largely through the skin.

The abdominal lesions found after death from this poison, are of a congestive nature, and similar to those found after poisoning from strychnia and agaricus. These lesions, not being due to a direct or topical action, must be attributed to the vaso-motor centres in the spinal cord, disordered in their functions by the absorption of the poison. The mechanism of death from this poison in the higher animals, is, probably, asphyxia by respiratory arrest, a pulmonary anæmiasis.

SPIRITUS NUCIS JUGLANDIS.—Dr. Edward Mackey, of Brighton, England (*Practitioner*, Dec.), gives the results of his experience in the treatment of obstinate vomiting, with spirit of walnut, a remedy almost obsolete, but for which he claims considerable efficacy as an anti-emetic, useful in many cases of obstinate emesis. The preparation he uses he obtained from Messrs. Southall, of Birmingham, and its formula is as follows:

Fresh wainuts, 30 oz.

Spirit of wine (rect.) 12 oz.; water q. s.

Distil 16 oz.

He has had good results from its use, in drachm doses, every one to four hours, in a little water, in cases of hysterical vomiting, the vomiting of obstinate dyspepsia, that of pregnancy, that due to anomalous causes, and even in cerebral vomiting. He has tried it also in septicæmia without effect; but this result is not surprising. He recommends its more extensive trial by the medical profession.

NITRITE OF AMYL.—Dr. Hugo Engel, *Phila. Med. Times*, Jan. 4, recommends inhalations of nitrite of amyl in cases of convulsions, when there is a general paleness of the whole surface, indicating almost a tetanus of

the arterioles. In a case of very severe convulsions of a child, after the failure of bromides and chloral, and when heroic treatment was certainly indicated, he injected one-fourth of a grain of morphine into the forearm, and applied five drops of nitrite of amyl on a handkerchief to the nose, producing at once a deep sleep, that lasted eight hours. To be on the safe side, he injected one one-hundred and eightieth of a grain of atropia as an antidote to the morphine. A rapid recovery ensued, but treatment with the bromides was continued.

The use of the atropia, in this case, very probably saved the child's life from the effects of the morphia, which, considering its age—sixteen months,—was altogether too heroic, in our opinion, for anything but an almost hopeless case. It may, nevertheless, have had an indispensable part in producing the general result of the recovery. The case is a good illustration of the therapeutic use of the antagonism of these two agents.

TREPHINING IN EPILEPSY.—In the *Archives Générale de Médecine* for December, 1878, Dr. Echeverria has published a *resumé* of the results of trephining in epilepsy, resulting from injuries of the skull. He has collected one hundred and forty-five cases of this operation. Of these, ninety-three were followed by recovery; eighteen by improvement; in five no change was produced; one was rendered worse; and death resulted in twenty-eight cases. The causes of death in the fatal cases, were extremely varied, viz.: suppuration over the whole surface of the brain, hemorrhage into the brain, under the seat of operation; gangrene of the membranes and cerebral abscess; obstinate hemorrhage of the superior longitudinal sinus; meningitis and meningo-encephalitis.

Dr. Echeverria gives the following *resumé* of the results of his analysis of the cases referred to:

Trepanation is the best means which can be employed in the treatment of epilepsy caused by injuries of the skull.

The immediate operation appears to be almost as successful as the late; fever forms a serious contra-indication to the operation. Insanity and paralysis justify the operation.

Trephining succeeds equally well when syphilitic products upon the bones of the skull, and which have proved rebellious to specific treatment, act as the cause of epilepsy.

The success of the operation depends, in great part, upon our ability to prevent irritation of the cerebral meninges.

It is, finally, advisable to keep the patient under anti-epileptic treatment for some time after the operation, in order to overcome the so-called epileptic habit of the nervous system.—*N. Y. Med. Record.*

DIGITALINE.—The following are the conclusions of a memoir by Guido Cavazzini, *Ann. d'Omodei*, 1878, t. 245, p. 115. (Abstr. in *Bull. Gén. de Thérap.*)

1. In frogs the action of digitaline is shown with great effect on the heart, particularly on the ventricle, in exciting the muscular fibres, the degree being in proportion to the dose employed.